

(Washington, D.C.) – Rep. Rush Holt (NJ-12) today introduced two bills – the “Hire a Veteran Week” Act and the Congressional Veteran Internship Act - designed to help servicemen and women secure employment when they return from deployment.

“If we can give our men and women the tools they need to succeed in Iraq and Afghanistan, then certainly we can give them the tools they need to succeed when they return home,” Holt said. “They sacrificed so much to serve our country, and especially in these trying times, our country has an obligation to serve them.”

The “Hire a Veteran Week” Act would call upon the President to proclaim an annual week that would remind businesses, unions, non-profits, trade associations, and agencies at all levels of government of the value of hiring veterans.

The Congressional Veteran Internship Act, would allow each member of Congress to hire one veteran as a Congressional intern for one year, and would provide each veteran in the program a \$25,000 stipend. The program would be open to all veterans of all eras.

“Veterans make excellent employees—I know because I have two working for me,” Holt said. “This program will give our veterans the opportunity to continue their careers in public service, and will put some of the finest men and women in the country to work on behalf of the American people.”

Both of these bills would put a national focus on the disadvantages new veterans face in building a life back home. Disconnected from the civilian workforce, often they lack the contacts civilians have. They have difficulty translating their military skill set into a resume employers understand. And they deal with mental health illnesses like depression and post-traumatic

stress disorder that can make it hard to keep a job.

The recession has only made the situation more dire. The unemployment rate for young veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan has risen 4 percent in the past year to 11.2 percent compared to 8.8 percent for non-veterans. The total number of unemployed veterans from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq has reached 170,000, about the same number of troops currently deployed to those countries.

The federal government has other programs and incentives designed to help returning veterans find work. The Labor Department operates career centers that provide priority service for veterans, and HireVetsFirst.gov, a website designed to connect veterans and employers. Most recently, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act included a \$2,400-per-person tax credit for employers who hire unemployed veterans in 2009 and 2010.

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